

April 18, 2007

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WASHINGTON - United States Senator Mary L. Landrieu, D-La., Congressman Richard Baker, R-La., and Congressman Charlie Melancon, D-La., today sent a letter to President George W. Bush asking him to withdraw his "concerns" about the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project. The White House earlier today released a Statement of Administration Policy expressing "concerns" over the provision in the Water Resources Development Act that authorized the key hurricane protection projects.

"The Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) issued today is extremely disconcerting and appears to be inconsistent with your previous comments, as recent as August 29, 2006. Particularly troubling, the SAP expresses 'concerns' about the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project and suggests the project requires reformulation."

On August 29, 2006, the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's landfall on the Gulf Coast, President Bush spoke in New Orleans and underscored the need for an effective levee system to protect coastal Louisiana. "In order to make sure that people understand there's hope and renewal in this area, they've got to have confidence in a stronger levee system," he said.

"Most important for you to consider is that the Morganza to the Gulf project will provide hurricane and flood protection to more than 120,000 residents of South Louisiana in an environmentally sensitive manner," the Members continued in their letter. "Additionally, this project protects significant energy infrastructure, critical to our national security and economy."

"Because of our strong support for this vitally important project, we worked late into the waning hours of the 109th Congress to authorize this project, and have continued our efforts in the current session by introducing appropriate authorizing legislation."

"We respectfully request that you express clear support for this project and work with Congress to provide essential hurricane and flood protection to the people of South Louisiana and to secure a key component of our nation's energy supply."

The Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project is a series of levees, locks and other systems through Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes that will, when complete, serve to protect about 120,000 people and 1,700 square miles of land against storm surges such as those caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Sen. Landrieu and Congressmen Baker and Melancon worked unsuccessfully through the final hours of the 109th Congress to authorize the project, which was originally contingently authorized in the 2000 WRDA bill. The bill directed the Army Corps of Engineers to deliver a favorable feasibility report by December 31st of that year, but while the recommendation was favorable, it was submitted more than a year late and the authorization expired. Congress has not delivered a new WRDA bill since.

"The Morganza project is essential to protecting the lives of thousands of people in south Louisiana," Sen. Landrieu said today. "Congressman Baker and Melancon and I worked late into the 109th Congress to get Morganza authorized, and we will continue to work with the Senate and House leadership to ensure that the project remains in the final WRDA bill. I have received EPW Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer's commitment to authorize the completion of this project, and I will work tirelessly to make sure that the Lafourche and Terrebonne area is protected.

"It is unfortunate that the Bush Administration continues to express 'concerns' about this vital provision. The President made a promise to Louisiana on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina of a strong levee system, but his continued failure to clearly support vital levee projects hampers our efforts and leaves many parts of Louisiana unready for a future catastrophe. I hope that the Administration will remove its reservations to this provision and clearly support Louisiana as we build an effective hurricane protection infrastructure.

"With or without the President's support, Congressman Baker and Melancon and I will keep pushing until Morganza is passed. Louisiana has waited long enough, and these projects are too important to let the White House force the Congress into removing the essential Morganza provision."

Congressman Melancon said, "Going into another hurricane season, I am disappointed the Administration is still concerned about moving forward with building the Morganza-to-the-Gulf hurricane and storm protection system. Morganza will provide hurricane and flood protection to 120,000 people in south Louisiana that are currently left exposed and vulnerable to deadly

storms coming off the Gulf. It is one of the most worthy and carefully-studied projects in the WRDA bill, and we can't afford to delay it any longer.

"However, regardless of the White House's official opinion on Morganza-to-the-Gulf, it is still just that - an opinion - and the President has given no indication that he would veto a bill that includes authorization for Morganza. Despite the Administration's concerns, Congress has not wavered in its commitment to Morganza and, even before today's announcement from the White House, I had secured a commitment from House leadership that authorization for Morganza would stay in WRDA. Senator Landrieu had also received similar assurances from leadership on the Senate side.

"I look forward to sending this bill to the President for his signature shortly so we can get moving on building comprehensive hurricane protection for the people of south Louisiana."

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#).

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